

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C. 20528

Secretary Mayorkas,

We write to express serious concerns with reports that the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) is considering defunding two programs vital to our national security at home and abroad: the U.S.-Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation grant program and the U.S.-Israel Binational Industrial Research and Development Homeland Security (BIRD HLS) program. These two programs incentivize academic and private sector innovation from two of the world's leaders in cybersecurity to jointly combat the evolving threats we face from malign actors. Both programs should be funded at the levels authorized by Congress in order to ensure both countries are armed with the tools necessary to protect our critical infrastructure.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment states, "Iran's growing expertise and willingness to conduct aggressive cyber operations make it a major threat to the security of U.S. and allied networks and data."<sup>1</sup> What is more, the threat to the U.S. and its Israeli allies is spelled out even more specifically—"Recent attacks against Israeli targets show that Iran is more willing than before to target countries with stronger capabilities." The intelligence community has made clear that the U.S. and Israel share common cyber risk from foreign nation-states, therefore, our partnership and cooperation is of utmost importance.

These programs strengthen our partnership with one of our most powerful allies in the cybersecurity space and ultimately will enhance our own operational capabilities. Israel's cybersecurity leadership has catalyzed innovation for over a decade. In 2021, over 40% of global cyber investments occurred in Israel, totaling \$8.8 billion in funding.<sup>2</sup>

We understand the importance of partnering with Israel, our greatest ally in the Middle East, on cybersecurity programs critical to our national security. In 2021, Congress passed the United States-Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation Enhancement Act to create the U.S.-Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation grant program, which plays an essential role in hardening critical infrastructure against cyber threats.

Over 70 members of Congress from both parties have signed requests to fully fund both the U.S.-Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation grant program and the BIRD HLS program in Congressional appropriations, a program which your agency

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2023-Unclassified-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Israel National Cyber Directorate. (2022, January 20). Israeli cyber security industry continued to grow in 2021: Record of \$8.8 billion raised. il. [https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/2021cyber\\_industry](https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/2021cyber_industry)

has committed to expand as recently as last year.<sup>3</sup> These programs are critical to fostering public-private partnerships that help incentivize innovation within an industry dependent on such advancements for the safety and security of our communities.

Currently, language outlined in the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations states, “S&T shall consider funding” both of these programs. This non-binding language allows the Department to decide whether these programs are funded to the levels authorized by Congress. With this in mind, we encourage you to consider the Congressional intent behind authorizing these programs and fund both programs to the fullest extent possible.

The United States and Israel share a rich history of cooperation in cybersecurity and defense. It is our duty to ensure we are taking the necessary steps to protect our critical infrastructure from evolving threats posed by malign actors. With that in mind, we believe is imperative that we continue these partnerships with the Government of Israel and promote our shared interest in cybersecurity innovation by fully funding these programs. Thank you for taking the time to address this critical issue.

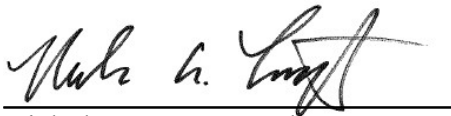
Sincerely,



Andrew R. Garbarino  
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace  
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy  
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota  
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito  
Member of Congress



Michael V. Lawler  
Member of Congress

<sup>3</sup> “Joint Statement of Intent Between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Israel National Cyber Directorate,” (2022, March 2) <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2022/03/02/joint-statement-intent-between-us-department-homeland-security-and-israel-national>